

## Convenience by lapits (nadagio)

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**Summary:**

Steve has detention. Unfortunately, also in detention are: his ex-girlfriend, his ex-girlfriend's new boyfriend, and the asshole who beat him unconscious just days ago. So. A little weird.

## Convenience

### Author's Note:

Billy makes a vague comment/accusation about pedophilia. Not sure if that's going to bother anyone, but, now you know.

Unfortunately fighting off monsters from another dimension didn't excuse a person from attending school on Monday. It didn't excuse Steve from afternoon detention for getting one too many tardies either, although the detention did at least excuse him from basketball practice.

Shortly after his last class of the day Steve made his way towards Mr. Richards' classroom, backpack slung over his shoulder and looking forward to taking a long nap. He dug around inside his bag for his detention slip before opening the door to walk inside.

Which is when he saw Nancy and Jonathan sitting next to each other at the front of the room, huddled together and talking quietly.

Oh. He kept walking when standing still drew their attention his way. He offered them a nod and a wave as he dropped off his slip with Mr. Richards and then took a seat a few desks away.

"Hi, Steve," Nancy said. Her smile said *I'm sorry, I still feel guilty, please forgive me*. Jonathan said nothing, staring at the empty surface of his desk.

Steve tried to look relaxed and friendly, tried to arrange his swollen, purple face in a way that said *I'm fine, you're good, this isn't weird at all*. He had no idea how successful he was. This was, after all, pretty weird.

"Hey," he said. "Fancy seeing you here. Catch trouble for skipping?"

"Yeah." She shrugged. "I guess tracking down a paranoid journalist to expose a government conspiracy doesn't count as an excused absence."

“Shame. Oughta get you some extra credit at least.”

Nancy laughed, then looked like she regretted it. She looked sideways at Jonathan who gave no visible reaction to their interaction. Steve sighed. Definitely weird.

“How’s your brother, Byers?” Steve asked.

Like he’d hoped, Jonathan softened a bit at that. He looked up and smiled, said, “Better, thanks. A lot better. Should be back at school soon.”

“Good.”

Jonathan and Nancy exchanged a look that was soft and fond – intimate. Steve had to look away, forced himself not to sigh again. He didn’t try to keep the conversation going. It was getting close to 3:30 anyway.

3:29. With thirty seconds or so to go until 3:30, the door opened. Of all people *Billy Hargrove* swaggered in and Steve didn’t even try to suppress the quiet groan that came out of him. Great. Perfect. Wonderful. Just the guy Steve wanted to see more of today.

Mr. Richards accepted Hargrove’s detention slip with a frown and said, “Cutting it close, Billy.”

Hargrove said, “I’m here on time, aren’t I?” When he turned around to survey the mostly empty classroom, his eyes immediately locked on and narrowed at the sight of Steve. His grin was toothy, shark-like, and not at all friendly.

Steve would have scowled if it didn’t hurt so much to move his face. Instead, he looked away as Hargrove walked closer and chose to sit, very deliberately, at the desk right next to him.

“Looking good today, Harrington,” Hargrove said, lilting and gleeful. “Something seems... different. Is it the hair?”

Fucker.

“No talking,” Mr. Richards said. “I don’t want to hear anything out of

any of you until 4:30.”

Hargrove leaned back in his chair with a smirk, legs spread obscenely. His eyes stayed locked on Steve’s face. Nancy looked between them with a concerned frown. Steve ignored them both. Jonathan, of course, ignored them all.

For several long, unbearable minutes, that’s the way things stayed. Hargrove stared at Steve, Steve ignored Hargrove, and Nancy mutely fussed over them both from ten feet away.

Steve closed his eyes, still hoping for that nap, but he was too tense. He could feel Hargrove’s eyes on him.

Another few minutes and Steve was making progress on zoning out, at least, when the harsh ring of a telephone had him jumping upright in his seat. Mr. Richards stood from his desk and walked to the phone mounted on the classroom wall. They all watched as he held a muttered conversation full of frowns and protests before hanging up with a sigh.

Mr. Richards looked each of them in the eyes before turning toward the door and saying, “I’m trusting all of you to act responsible and still be here when I get back. If you’re not...” The threat was unspoken but understood.

He left the room. Hargrove started laughing the moment the door shut behind.

“Can’t even do detention right in this shit town,” he said. “Who do I complain to if I’m not feeling properly chastised for my misdeeds?”

“Could talk to a priest,” Steve said. Bad idea. He regretted speaking when Hargrove turned his attention right back to Steve.

“Harrington,” he said, glaring. “You know, I never got a straight answer out’a you about what the fuck you were doing with Max and those other kids.”

“Babysitting,” Steve said, glaring right back.

“Funny, don’t recall anybody asking you to *babysit* Max. In the

middle of the night. Was wrecking my car part of how you *babysit*, too?”

“You might remember I was unconscious for that part,” Steve said. “Having my face beaten in, and all. Not too surprising the kids felt a need to get away from the psycho who did it.”

Hargrove sneered. “Psycho, huh? Well I don’t mind playing psycho again and finishing the job too if you don’t stay the fuck away from Max.”

“I’m not gonna try and keep her away from her friends.”

“Oh, so you’re a *friend* now? Is that what you say to all the kids as you touch them in their naughty places?”

“You’re *disgusting!*” Nancy said, standing from her desk. Steve turned to look at her, surprised at her intervention. “He isn’t like that! And it’s not his fault Max ran off.”

Hargrove stared at Nancy and slowly stood up, deceptively casual. Steve tensed, ready to lunge at the slightest hint that the asshole was getting violent.

“*Nancy*, right?” Hargrove smiled. “The ex? Awfully defensive. Is that why you dumped him? Getting too close to your baby brother?”

“You have a sick mind,” Nancy said tightly, fists clenched at her sides. “Seeing a decent man being caring and responsible, and making those sorts of accusations. Be as angry as you want, but don’t you *dare* pretend any of it is his fault.”

Nancy stared him down, and after a tense minute or so Steve was amazed to see Hargrove back off with a careful shrug. Nancy was amazing.

“Fine. Not a pedo.” Hargrove turned back to Steve, sneering. “But you better be *very* careful, Harrington, that next time you see Max she has permission to be there or I will *not* be so forgiving.”

“Got it,” Steve said, nodding, a little bemused. And relieved.

Billy shifted on his feet, jaw working side to side. “And I’m not gonna apologize for beating your face in.”

Steve snorted. He said, “Didn’t expect you to. You did terrorize those kids though, Lucas in particular. If you’re feeling apologetic.”

Hargrove crossed his arms and made a grunting sound that could have been acknowledgement or disagreement. Jonathan tugged on Nancy’s sleeve until she sat down again. They started whispering and Steve closed his eyes again with a sigh. Crisis averted. Maybe he could still take a nap.

He was just starting to get back in the zone when he heard the screech of desk legs skittering along the floor. Steve opened his eyes to see Hargrove stride toward the front of the room.

“This is fucking stupid,” Hargrove said, looking over the contents of Mr. Richards’ desk with a scowl. “You really just gonna sit there quietly for an hour?”

Was that question aimed at Steve? He looked over at Nancy and Jonathan in time to see them start to hold hands, completely ignoring anyone else. He looked away.

“Just what *should* we be doing then, Hargrove?”

“Raise hell? Fuck if I know.” He moved on from the desk and started rifling through a filing cabinet in the corner, pulling and replacing papers at random. Asshole. “I can never find shit to do in this hick town.”

That... almost sounded like an attempt at conversation. Steve was bored enough to take the bait. Conversing with an asshole was maybe more interesting than silence. As long as he was being less of an asshole than usual, at least.

“Was there really so much to do back in California? You surf every day or something?”

Hargrove scoffed and shut the cabinet. “We’re not all beach bums, dipshit. And yes, there was a *lot* more to do.” He moved toward the window and fiddled with its latch to get it open. “Any day of the

week you can find a party or concert or something. Meet new people. *Hot, interesting* people. Not the same dull cows, day in day out.”

He pulled a cigarette out of his jacket and lit up, leaning toward the window so the smoke could escape outside. Steve shook his head. The asshole was ballsy for sure. Mr. Richards could be back any minute and catch him smoking. Steve thought Nancy might comment, but she just gave Hargrove a disapproving frown. She had apparently decided to ignore Hargrove, and Steve as a consequence, in favor of talking quietly with Jonathan.

“Sounds nice,” Steve admitted reluctantly. “Why’d you move here if it’s so great?”

Hargrove’s head snapped around quick to glare and he said, “None of your fucking business, Harrington.”

Steve raised his hands in a gesture for peace. “Yeah, all right. Just curious.”

“You can shove that curiosity right up your ass.”

Touchy bastard. Steve stood up and walked toward him, Hargrove watching warily all the while. Steve nodded toward the cigarette.

“Gonna share?”

Hargrove shook his head but still offered the smoke, saying, “You trying to make friends, now?”

Steve grabbed the cigarette and brought it to his lips. He leaned toward the open window and took a drag. Exhaled. “Trying to smoke, Hargrove.”

“Sure.” Hargrove smirked, taking back the cigarette and tapping off some ash. “If you say so.”

“I do.”

“A little strange, is all,” Hargrove said. “You getting close and bumming a cigarette, being ‘curious,’ when all I’ve done is mock you, smash your face, and call you a pedophile.”

"I'm the forgiving sort," Steve said. "And as you so charmingly said, there aren't a lotta options in Hawkins. Or in this room."

Together their eyes flicked toward Nancy and Jonathan, sitting cozy in their own little lovestruck world. Steve told himself it didn't bother him.

"You really so forgiving you're not angry at your girl for dumping you?" Hargrove nodded in their direction. "For a scrawny weirdo?"

"No one's fault." Steve shrugged, looking away. "Can't choose who you love."

"Bullshit," Hargrove said, offering the cigarette. Steve took it with narrow eyes. He had recently developed a strong resentment for that word.

"What do you mean, bullshit?"

"I mean bullshit. Love is a choice," Hargrove said. He crossed his arms and looked out the window. "Some people just don't make it. Don't wanna put in the effort it takes to love you."

Steve gave him a sideways glance, cigarette at his lips. After letting out a puff of smoke he asked, "That wisdom come from personal experience?"

"Fuck you," Hargrove said, bristling. He turned and walked away. "Thought you wanted to smoke."

Steve let him go quietly, finishing off the cigarette and wondering who chose not to love Billy Hargrove and why. Actually, the why seemed obvious but Steve decided the thought was uncharitable and tried to ignore it.

Instead, as he flicked the cold cigarette stub outside and closed the window, Steve wondered why Nancy might not chose to love *him*. It wasn't a pleasant thing to contemplate. He was quiet when he sat beside Hargrove again.

He couldn't help but watch Nancy and Jonathan out of the corner of his eye, couldn't help but ask himself what he did or didn't do that

made Jonathan the better choice.

“Hey!”

Steve startled and turned to look at Hargrove, who was drumming on the top of his desk with his hands.

“I’m fucking bored,” is what Hargrove said. The guy was moody as hell, acting hot and cold every few minutes. Steve thought he’d finally pissed him off enough to be left alone, but apparently not.

Steve rolled his eyes and said, “It’s detention.”

“And I’m fucking bored.”

“You don’t have homework?”

“Don’t have my books or anything.”

“You wanna borrow mine?”

Hargrove glared at Steve like his generous offer was some grave insult. Fucker.

“You really think I’m gonna do *homework* if I’ve got the choice?” Hargrove said.

“You don’t really have the choice,” Steve pointed out. “Not if you want to pass your classes.”

Hargrove scowled. He said, “Don’t see *you* working on homework. Why’s that?”

Steve shrugged. He didn’t actually want to work on homework, either.

Hargrove sat up and leaned closer. “Oh, I get it,” he said, smirking. “You’re still trying to make friends. Chatting me up. I’m flattered, Harrington.”

Steve had to laugh, incredulous. The guy was ridiculous. *He* was the one who couldn’t shut up for five minutes.

“Don’t get too excited,” Steve said, shaking his head. “I’m not that desperate.”

“No?” Hargrove tilted his head and stretched out his legs, spread them far too wide to be anything but an invitation. “Shame. Could be good for you.”

Steve dragged his eyes back up to Hargrove’s smug face. “Your friendship?”

Hargrove *winked*. He fucking *winked*. “That too.”

Steve had to look away. “Does that shit really work for you?”

“Oh yeah. You saying it’s not working for *you*?”

“It really isn’t.” Steve couldn’t bring himself to look Hargrove in the eye as he said it, though.

“Liar.”

Steve forced himself to turn, to ask him face to face, “What do you want from me, Hargrove?”

Hargrove dropped the sleazy smile. Good.

Nancy’s hushed voice in the background was the soundtrack to their stand off, and wasn’t that fucking typical. Irony? It was definitely weird, at least.

Eventually Hargrove looked away, drumming his fingers on top of the desk.

“Call me Billy,” he said quietly. Serious and genuine like Steve had never seen him.

And that was it. After all the shit Hargrove had said and done, was one sincere request enough to wipe that out and start fresh? Maybe not. But friendship, or friendly acquaintanceship at least, sounded a whole hell of a lot better than what they’d had going on so far.

So he made a choice.

“Sure, Billy. Call me Steve.”

**Author's Note:**

I started this attempting to write some sort of Breakfast Club thing, but then Nancy & Jonathan didn't want to talk, and Steve & Billy didn't want to \*stop\* talking, so... now it's something else. Hope you enjoyed. Have a followup story or two in mind. Thanks for reading!